DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 827 SP 041 794

AUTHOR	Knapp, Michael S.; Copland, Michael A.; Talbert, Joan E.
TITLE	Leading for Learning: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders. CTP Research Report.
INSTITUTION	Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, Seattle, WA.; DeWitt Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund, Pleasantville, NY.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2003-02-00
NOTE	35p.
CONTRACT	R308B970003
AVAILABLE FROM	Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Box 353600, Seattle, WA 98195-3600. Web site: http://www.ctpweb.org.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Environment; *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; *Instructional Leadership; *Leadership Qualities; *Leadership Responsibility; *Reflective Teaching
IDENTIFIERS	Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

The framework of reflective ideas and tools presented here, and in the companion, "Leading for Learning Sourcebook: Concepts and Examples," supports leaders' efforts to improve student learning in schools and districts. Overall, the framework sees to enable powerful, equitable learning for all students. Its ideas and tools highlight five areas of action for improvement and various routes for advancing student and professional learning, while building a system that connects and sustains these efforts. Used as a leaders' toolbox or dynamic organizer, the overall framework is designed primarily for school and district administrators who bear formal responsibility for improving student learning and are most able to bring influence and resources to support that goal. The ideas and suggestions are based on published and ongoing research combined with the craft knowledge of a wide range of practicing educators. The booklet includes: "A Call for Education Leadership"; "Hector's Challenge to School and District Leaders"; "Reflective Tools for Understanding and Action: How Leaders Influence Learning" (learning in context and leading for learning); "What Leading for Learning Means in Practice" (establishing a focus on learning, building professional communities that value learning, engaging external environments that matter for learning, acting strategically and sharing leadership, and creating coherence); and "Meeting Hector's Challenge." (SM)

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LEADING FOR LEARNING:

Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders

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The Center's program of research is carried out in collaboration with other research organizations, among them other national research centers. The Center is affiliated with a variety of professional and advocacy organizations that represent teachers, teacher educators, state and local policymakers, disciplinary groups, and educational reform interests.

Both this document, *Leading for Learning: Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders,* and its companion piece, *Leading for Learning Sourcebook: Concepts and Examples,* can be downloaded free of charge from the Center's web site: www.ctpweb.org

The Center is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Educational Research and Improvement, PR/Award R308B970003. The work on this framework was undertaken by Center members with support from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds. Opinions reflect those of the authors and not necessarily those of the granting agencies.

LEADING FOR LEARNING:

Reflective Tools for School and District Leaders

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February 2003

Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy
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DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund
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Sources

The reflective ideas and tools for educators offered here synthesize ideas from many sources, including research literature, examples of leadership in action, and educators' craft knowledge. While casting a wide net in the research literature, we concentrated on work related to instructional leadership, school reform and renewal, teacher learning and professional community, teacher leadership, organizational learning, policy-practice connections, and education in high-poverty, high-diversity settings. The most important of these sources appear in the endnotes. The literature base is more extensively discussed in a companion piece, *Leading for Learning Sourcebook: Concepts and Examples.*

From these literatures, we developed an overall framework that includes reflective ideas and tools for education leaders. To ground them in practice, we assembled examples that, with two exceptions, derive from actual cases reported in published research, current studies, or were contributed by practitioners. The extended example of Hector and his teacher and the concluding district vignette were adapted from published cases.

A working draft, field tested across a five-month period from April through August of 2002, was refined through solicited critiques, interactive working sessions, and dialog following presentations. More specifically, 25 reviewers, evenly divided between scholars and practicing educators at both school and district levels, scrutinized the draft from a variety of perspectives. Working sessions included a meeting with members of the National College of School Leadership from the United Kingdom, a session with the University of Washington Policymakers Exchange, a week-long institute for aspiring system-level educational leaders, and a similar gathering of school principals. In addition, we presented successive versions at national meetings of scholars and practitioners, including: the American Education Research Association, the University Council on Educational Administration, the Wallace-Readers Digest Funds' *Leaders Count* Initiative, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.

In all, the development team received commentary and suggestions from over 300 individuals. These included a broad spectrum of working educators and individuals outside of education, including scholars and practitioners from this country and abroad, and from different racial or ethnic backgrounds; educators working at district level and in schools; and individual experts working in elementary and secondary schools. The majority were practicing school and district leaders. This final version includes salient contributions from all sources.

Michael S. Knapp, Director
Center for the Study of Teaching & Policy (CTP)

A Call for Education Leadership

A sense of urgency pervades public education these days as students struggle to meet the high standards set by their state and the nation. Teachers are pressed as never before to improve education quality and equity. Achievement gaps persist, and parents of students who attend low-performing schools increasingly seek an escape from public education.

The call for strong leadership in education is unmistakable—leadership that brings about significant improvement in learning and narrowing of achievement gaps. Yet many school and district administrators report their time is consumed by matters unrelated to learning improvement. Even with enough time to focus, the task leaders face is complex, and it is not always clear what they should be doing to contribute to that goal.

Support for leaders' improvement efforts

The framework of reflective ideas and tools presented here, and in the companion *Leading for Learning Sourcebook: Concepts and Examples,* supports leaders' efforts to improve student learning in schools and districts. Overall, the framework seeks to enable powerful, equitable learning for all students. To that end, its ideas and tools highlight five areas of action for improvement and various routes ("pathways") for advancing student and professional learning, while building a system that connects and sustains these efforts.

Used as a leaders' toolbox or a dynamic organizer, the overall framework is designed primarily for school and district administrators who bear formal responsibility for improving student learning, and are most able to bring influence and resources to support that goal. The tools are also for those who can "lead for learning" from other positions, including teacher leaders, teacher developers, union leaders, community leaders, and policymakers. These individuals can use the tools to begin leading for learning in a variety of school and district settings.

The ideas and suggestions presented here are based on published and ongoing research combined with the craft knowledge of a wide range of practicing educators. The authors reviewed various bodies of literature from both inside and outside the field of education, as detailed in Sources (page 4), Endnotes (page 31), and in the *Leading for Learning Sourcebook: Concepts and Examples.* The review and revision process involved over 300 educators, scholars, and other professionals whose suggestions were subsequently integrated into this document. By themselves, many of the ideas advanced here are not new—together, however, they provide a new synthesis of thinking in the field that can help leaders find direction in the face of complex challenges.

Key Idea:

This framework of reflective tools and ideas can help education leaders examine and guide student, professional, and system learning in their school or district.

The framework is not a set of recipes or a change theory. Nor does it outline specific standards for leadership practice, such as those created by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) or by national administrators' associations, which offer a vision of desirable practice for individuals with particular roles.[1] While compatible with such standards, this framework seeks not to prescribe, but to guide leaders in different positions and environments toward defining a learning improvement agenda and developing strategies for action.

Tools for reflection

The framework offers leaders reflective tools that can guide self-assessment, planning, or professional development. To guide self-assessment, the reflective tools can help leaders take stock of their situations and imagine new possibilities for action. As part of professional development, the tools engage leaders and their colleagues in discovering more powerful connections between leadership and learning. To aid planning, the tools can help leaders map out new strategies for improvements in a specific school or district. Overall, these reflective tools and the ideas underlying them provide a framework for leaders to build a coherent, collaborative system that supports powerful, equitable learning for all students.

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Hector's Challenge to School and District Leaders

The work of educational leaders is ultimately about guiding improvements in learning. A glimpse of a young learner and his teacher brings into focus challenges that school and district leaders face in seeking to fulfill this responsibility.[2]

Hector's mathematics lesson

It is Friday, and the Period 2 Mathematics class is about to begin. Hector and his classmates, a mix of Anglo and Latino children, crowd in from the busy hallway, find seats, and fumble for their homework sheets. Some never find them; a few—primarily a handful of boys located at seats around the edge of the room—pay little attention to what is going on. The teacher, Mr. G., appears not to notice (for the moment, the non-participants are quiet). Today Hector is feeling confident; his older sister Marita, who excels at math, spent time at home helping him complete the assignment, the first he has finished this week.

The teacher uses the next 15 minutes to review the 35 assigned problems for solving simple equations with one unknown variable. Mr. G. stands in front of the class asking for the answer to each problem and providing it if no one volunteers promptly. Twice, Hector tentatively raises his hand, as if to offer an answer; the teacher does not recognize him. The students correct their sheets and report how many they got right. Mr. G. then shifts to a 15-minute presentation at the blackboard on the finer points of solving one-variable algebraic equations. Hector begins to fidget during the explanation; his non-participating classmates are becoming louder and more noticeable. "I'm not very good at math," he explains in our later conversation. "Maybe Marita will help me."

The class ends with a period of seatwork—more practice solving for X. Seated at his desk near the rear of the room, Mr. G. enters homework scores into his grade book. Hector works sporadically at the seatwork task but becomes distracted by the small contingent of nonparticipating boys who spend the time engaged in unrelated talk. Mr. G. pays little attention, except to broadcast a general "Shh" now and again. At one point, Hector quietly seeks assistance from a nearby classmate, questioning her in Spanish. "No talking, please," says the teacher. Shortly, Hector and his classmates are headed out the door for Period 3.

This lesson, typical of many in American classrooms, presents the school or district leader with fundamental challenges for improving learning and teaching. While the teacher is experienced and certificated, and most students are engaged in academic tasks, they are not probing deeply into content and some are disengaged from the classwork. A cursory visit to Mr. G.'s classroom wouldn't raise alarms; many students appear to be learning to solve math problems by following instructions from the teacher and their textbook. Nearby classrooms reveal more obvious management concerns for school and district leaders to worry about. But for Hector, and even for Mr. G., something is missing.

Key Idea:

Leaders in Hector's school and district are trying to implement higher standards, but are overwhelmed by students who need more support and teachers who need deeper content knowledge and broader teaching skills.

Mr. G.'s reflection

> After school, Mr. G. stands near the bus line, his typical Friday afternoon duty. He exchanges friendly barbs with some students waiting in line and wishes each a "good weekend" as they board. Walking back to the classroom, he comments to the observer about the math lesson that transpired earlier. "Most of that class just doesn't seem to get it," he explains. A probe about strategy indicates uncertainty on his part about his plan for teaching kids to solve for X. "Repeating the thing till they get it just doesn't seem to cut it," he reflects. When questioned about the progress of the non-participating group in the math class, Mr. G. intimates that he has tried hard to involve them and they "just don't respond; they don't seem to care about learning." But he feels an obligation to "plow ahead"; the state test is only three months away.

Though personable with most of his students, this teacher's reliance on a drill-and-practice approach to instruction undermines his ability to achieve a high level of math learning among all his students. The content of instruction is a far cry from what the district and state standards call for. However, Mr. G. has few opportunities to learn content and instructional strategies of standards-based mathematics education, nor has he sought them out. He is reluctant to change a career-long teaching repertoire that seems to work for many students. Furthermore, he hasn't yet focused on the instructional challenges posed by the growing population of students who struggle to simultaneously master subject content, language, and other school demands.

Mr. G.'s school and district

Administrators in Mr. G.'s school and district are, for the most part, too preoccupied with other things to notice what is taking place in his classroom. The school's administrators are trying to work out problems with the new schedule for this year-round school, while attending to the recent arrival of several emergency certified teachers who are struggling in their first teaching assignments. As in many schools, the new teachers and Mr. G. operate in isolation from one another.

In addition, the district leaders are trying to manage political tensions between the city's large low-income Latino community and the mostly middle-class Anglo community, as well as responding to accountability pressures from the state and from the federal No Child Left Behind policy. District administrators also are negotiating the next teachers' contract and are at odds with the union over a number of issues.

Issues for leaders

Given time to reflect, most school and district leaders would want more for Hector and the other young learners in Mr. G.'s classroom. They would want to provide more powerful and equitable learning opportunities, but, to fulfill that responsibility, they need to confront several issues and questions:

- **Focus on Learning.** How can leaders know enough about student learning and instructional methods in particular classrooms, subjects, and grades, to focus improvement efforts?
- **Professional Development.** How can teachers learn to improve their practice, and what conditions would motivate and support it?

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Key Idea:

A school or district leader's ability to imagine ways to improve learning depends on an understanding of existing and potential connections between leading and learning.

- **Environment.** How do family and community conditions contribute to the current situation, and how can they become part of the solution?
- **Strategy.** Once a focus for improvement is established, what specific actions provide the greatest influence on changing what teachers and learners do? What resistances stand in the way, and what can leaders do about them?
- **Coherence.** How can leaders' actions and resources have a reinforcing effect on learners' and teachers' work?

The answers are not simple. School and district leaders' ability to imagine constructive answers to these questions depends on their understanding of existing and potential connections between leading and learning in their particular setting. To gain that understanding and to take action, leaders need powerful reflective tools.

Reflective Tools for Understanding and Action:
How Leaders Influence Learning

Hector's learning and Mr. G.'s attempts to help him learn are not isolated events. They occur in the context of conditions inside and outside the classroom as well as in Hector's family and culture, his prior knowledge and experience with schooling, and Mr. G.'s background and working experience. Hector's learning reflects Mr. G's learning and that of his colleagues, not to mention what leaders in the school and district understand about good instruction and how to create a system that supports it. Central to the improvement of Hector's learning are, first, a picture of the multiple influences on his school learning experience and, second, ideas about how leaders' actions can involve student, professional, and system learning in the improvement effort.

Learning in Context

Powerful, equitable student learning for Hector and his classmates is the central goal of leadership. The underlying vision emphasizes providing all students, regardless of the challenges they face, the means to master challenging content and skills in subject areas, develop habits of mind for further learning, and prepare for fulfilling occupational futures and citizenship in a democracy.[3] In pursuing this end, leaders engage three learning agendas: student learning, professional learning, and system learning.

Student learning

Students' opportunities for learning reside in the interactions among learners, teachers, and content. Their learning—the outcome of those interactions—depends on how teachers implement curriculum, design academic tasks, and engage students in these tasks, as well as how students approach their teachers, each other, and their work.[4] Powerful and equitable instruction enables all students to develop deep subject matter knowledge and skills. But to be able to offer such instruction, teachers must have opportunities to develop corresponding knowledge and skills.

Professional learning

Teachers' learning includes the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they acquire while preparing for and renewing their practice. Opportunities for effective professional development include those that come from interacting with other professionals who offer ideas, critique, inspiration, and moral support in the renewal process.[5] Through such interactions, teachers begin to look at their own practice differently and to enhance their students' learning opportunities in the classroom. Through similar kinds of opportunities, administrators learn to establish and support teachers' and students' learning.

Key Idea:

What a student learns depends on what the teacher knows and believes, and on what school and district leaders know and believe about supporting teachers' and students' learning.

System learning

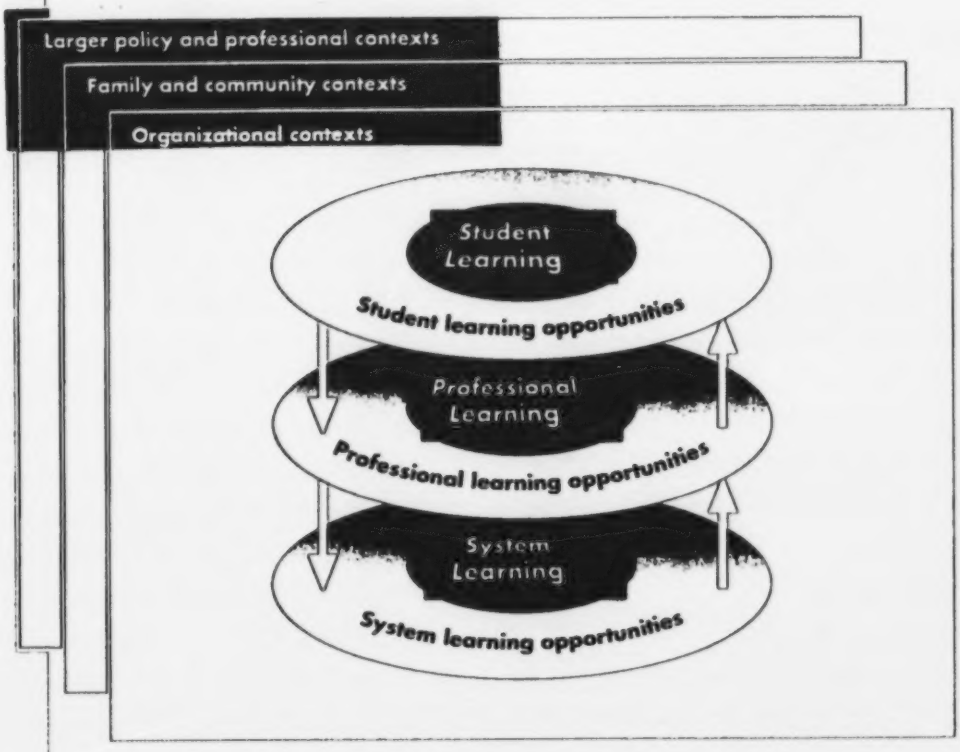
Through inquiry into how a district or school functions and performs, leaders can support "system learning."[6] This includes insight into the functioning of the system as a whole to develop and evaluate new policies, practices, and structures that enhance its performance. Opportunities for system learning arise through strategic planning endeavors; evaluation of policies, programs, and resource use; "action research" focused on system-wide issues; and application of indicators to measure progress toward defined goals.

All three learning agendas in context

Each learning agenda acts as context for the other two. Signaled by the vertical arrows in Figure 1, what professionals learn can influence student learning and vice versa. Information about both student and professional learning impacts system learning which, in turn, can reshape the experience and actions of students and professional adults.

At the same time, all three learning agendas are influenced by a larger set of contexts. Families, organizational conditions, and the larger policy and professional environment all enable and constrain the learning of everyone in the system.

Figure 1: *Three Learning Agendas, in Context*



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Key Idea:

Leading for learning means creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students and adults, and motivating them to take advantage of these opportunities.

Leading for Learning

Had leaders been pursuing all three learning agendas in Hector's and Mr. G.'s school and district, their story would be different. In essence, leading for learning means creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals, and the system, and motivating or compelling participants to take advantage of these opportunities.

Leaders can accomplish this by committing themselves to five areas of action that together make it more likely that all students can be offered a powerful and equitable education.[7]

Leading for Learning: Five Areas of Action

School and district leaders can advance powerful and equitable student learning by:

1 **Establishing a focus on learning**—by persistently and publicly focusing their own attention and that of others on learning and teaching.

2 **Building professional communities that value learning**—by nurturing work cultures that value and support their members' learning.

3 **Engaging external environments that matter for learning**—by building relationships and securing resources from outside groups that can foster students' or teachers' learning.

4 **Acting strategically and sharing leadership**—by mobilizing effort along multiple "pathways" that lead to student, professional, or system learning, and by distributing leadership across levels and among individuals in different positions.

5 **Creating coherence**—by connecting student, professional, and system learning with one another and with learning goals.

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Key Idea:

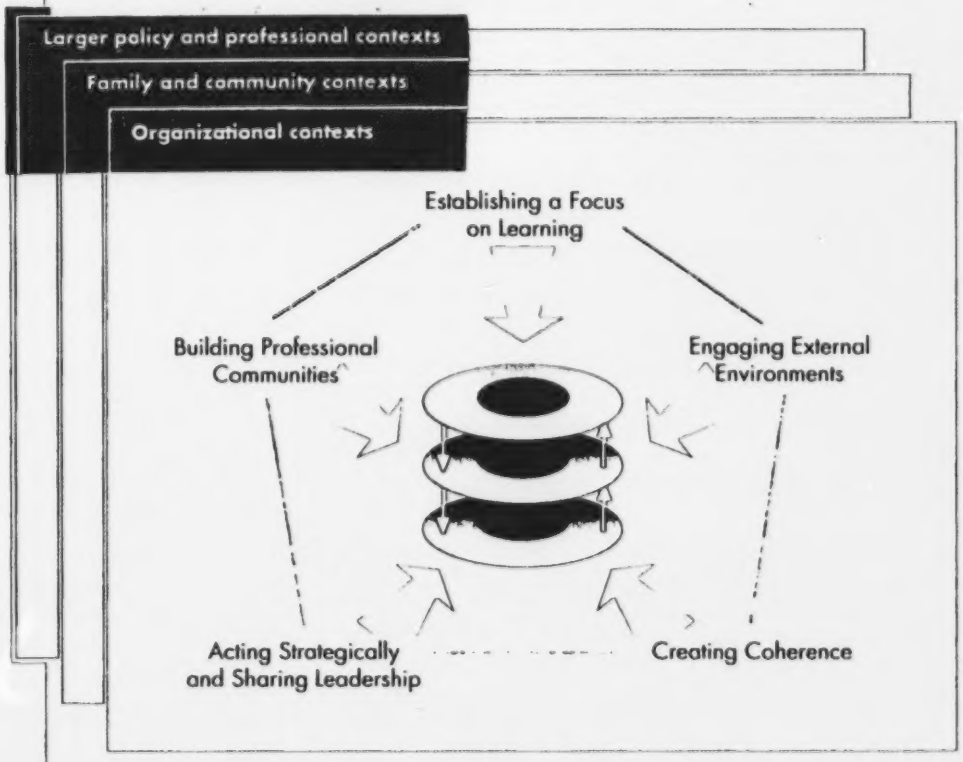
Mutually reinforcing actions along pathways to student, professional, and system learning enable learning improvement.

Central to these assertions about leading for learning is the notion that leaders not only set the stage for learning, they also take concrete steps along pathways that lead to student, professional, and system learning. In this sense, leaders can exert a direct and identifiable influence on learning results.

The five areas of action mutually reinforce each other. Leaders pursuing a few of these areas, while ignoring others, may not achieve the learning results they seek. Together, these actions establish powerful conditions supporting all three learning agendas.

As illustrated by Figure 2 below, the five areas of action are not a linear sequence of steps for improving learning and teaching. Rather, each supports the others, and leaders operating from different positions can pursue activities in each area simultaneously. That said, leaders may find it more natural to start with the first—establishing a focus on learning. It forms a foundation for building professional communities, engaging external environments, acting strategically, sharing leadership, and creating coherence.

Figure 2: *Overview: Leading for Learning*



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What Leading for Learning Means in Practice

Leaders at different levels of public education can work to improve students' learning by pursuing the five areas of action introduced here. Leading for learning in each area includes essential tasks and challenges. Hector's situation and other examples illustrate both the issues and the possibilities for school and district leaders.

1 Establishing a Focus on Learning:

Leaders focus their own and others' attention persistently and publicly on learning and teaching.

Administrators in Hector's district pay little attention to the nature and quality of learning for all students, even though they worry about test scores and the state's pressure on low-performing schools. In contrast, administrators and teacher leaders in some other districts have managed to establish and consistently communicate a public focus on learning and teaching. Consider one example from a district leader's weekly routine:

> The superintendent of an urban district serving 13,000 students devotes 7:30 – 8:30 every Monday morning to meeting with students at their school to talk over what they are learning. Each week, she selects a different school and several students at random. Nothing is allowed to interfere with this standing commitment.

Essential tasks for leaders

Leaders establish a public, persistent focus on learning by:

- Making it central to their own work.
- Consistently communicating that student learning is the shared mission of students, teachers, administrators, and the community.
- Articulating core values that support a focus on powerful, equitable learning.
- Paying public attention to teaching.

Reflective Questions:

① How is learning defined and demonstrated in your school or district? How is learning distinguished from test performance?

② How (and how much) do you focus attention on student learning? What prompts you to?

③ What values do leaders share in your school and district, and how do they support a focus on learning? How are these values demonstrated?

Establishing a focus on learning looks like this –

IN SCHOOLS.

Principals, teacher leaders, and coaches might:

- Regularly visit classrooms and participate in professional learning activities with staff.
- Initiate and guide conversations about student learning.
- Make student learning a focus for performance evaluation.
- Establish teaching and learning as central topics for school-wide faculty meetings.
- Examine data about student learning and use it for school planning.
- Work with others to set goals for learning improvement, and then review progress.

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL.

In addition to doing similar activities, administrators and district professional development staff might also:

- Establish procedures for collecting data about student learning and regularly share it with school staff.
- Select or develop assessment instruments that are aligned with high standards for student learning.
- Communicate frequently about student learning to parents, the community, and media.
- Make student learning a primary reference point for decision-making and resource allocation.

Process and challenges

Key Idea:

Leading for learning rests on a set of shared values that embrace ambitious standards, belief in human capacity, equity, inquiry, and professional support.

Accounts of leadership that focus on learning and teaching suggest that building consensus around an improvement agenda is essential.[8] Although often springing from a leader's vision, a system-wide focus on student learning goals usually results from a long process of research, discussion, debate, and perhaps conflict as participants vie for control of the learning improvement agenda. The challenge for leaders is to establish a collective focus on learning without compromises that dilute the focus, or that result in oscillation from one focus to the next (e.g., this year we'll do math, next year science).

Administrators and teacher leaders play a significant role in these deliberations over a learning agenda. They are in a position to provide professional and research knowledge, as well as influence the community's views of what counts as learning. In confronting testing and accountability issues, leaders face fundamental questions concerning how to represent what students know and can do. Though they lack complete control of the measurement of learning, local leaders can still influence how the public perceives standardized test scores and other data that are used to inform instruction. In this era of high-stakes testing and accountability school and district leaders play a central role in interpreting these pressures and guiding productive responses to them.

A persistent, public focus on learning sometimes derives from a theory of learning and teaching championed by strong district leaders.[9] More often, it develops through deliberation that is prompted by local concerns and evidence of student performance. In this process, leaders can help participants develop a focus by invoking commitment to core

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values, drawing attention to (and interpreting) evidence, showcasing successful learning and teaching, and turning external pressures into local initiatives that spotlight student learning.

In building consensus around the need for improved teaching and learning and specific goals for improvement, leaders inevitably address conflicts over competing goals, interests, and beliefs about education. They may encounter other challenges, such as a culture of "good enough" that is satisfied when most, but not all, students are learning or when separate departments pursue unrelated learning agendas. The leaders' work is to identify and use these challenges to re-focus attention on learning.

The foundation for improvement: Core values and norms about learning

Leaders are better able to face these challenges when they hold fundamental values for improving learning that they share with other educators.[10] These values become the foundation for improvement efforts:

- **Ambitious standards for student learning.** A high level of understanding and skills in critical areas of learning is essential.
- **Belief in human capacity.** Students and professionals can meet ambitious learning standards if they have effective instruction and support.
- **Commitment to equity.** Achievement gaps among students who differ by class, race, ethnicity, and language must be narrowed and ultimately eliminated.
- **Belief in professional support and responsibility.** Teachers and administrators must share responsibility and hold one another accountable for improving educational quality and equity.
- **Commitment to inquiry.** Using evidence to evaluate and change practice is essential to continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

2 Building Professional Communities that Value Learning:

Leaders nurture work cultures that value and support their members' learning.

Leaders in Mr. G.'s school, like many, have not created a professional community that would support his improvement in mathematics teaching. Professional norms in the school do not promote collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective responsibility for improving teaching and learning for Hector and his peers.

In other schools and districts, leaders have built work cultures in which learning opportunities and mutual accountability for improving instruction persist. They do it by working through professional communities that include teacher groups in subject departments and interdisciplinary teams, collegial networks across schools, and other organizations in the school or district.[11] Consider what is taking place in one high school:

The principal of a high school serving a diverse and relatively low-performing student population adamantly resists watering down standards or curriculum for students. He asserts that what needs to be changed for this population is not the level of expectations but the kinds and extent of support for students' academic performance. He consistently engages teachers in school-wide conversations about their beliefs concerning their students' abilities, effective teaching practice, and shared responsibility for student achievement. This school has improved consistently both on the state's measures of performance and in meeting their goals for moving a significant percentage of bottom-level students up to higher levels of performance.

Essential tasks for leaders

The practical work of building professional community involves these essential tasks:

- Modeling, guiding, and facilitating participation in professional communities that value learning.
- Building trusting relationships among professionals in the school or district.
- Promoting a focus on learning and associated core values.

Reflective Questions:

① How focused on learning is the culture of your district, school, or other working group?

② What could you or others do to make learning a more important part of your work culture?

③ How well are your colleagues' basic professional needs being met? How ready are they to critically examine their own and each others' practice?

Building professional communities around learning looks like this —

IN SCHOOLS.

To build work cultures around learning, school leaders may:

- Create structures for regular staff interaction about learning and teaching.
- Set up cycles of school-wide inquiry into learning and teaching performance.
- Identify and address staff assumptions about norms, values, and beliefs related to learning.
- Recruit teachers who work from a values base consistent with the culture leaders seek to develop.
- Create opportunities for staff to have voice in decisions about issues related to teaching and learning.
- Celebrate accomplishments in student and teacher learning.

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL.

Similarly, to promote working norms and related values across all schools in the district, administrators and staff may:

- Support schedule changes that enable staff to work together.
- Work with the union to establish provisions for collaborative work among teachers.
- Redefine the work of the central office staff in terms of its relationship to learning improvement.
- Guide a process of inquiry into district-wide organization and performance.
- Take part in professional learning opportunities as a colleague.

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Reflective Questions:

④ What inhibits the growth of professional community in your school or district? How can these conditions be addressed?

⑤ How do you and other leaders interact with colleagues? How can you build respect, trust, and mutual listening into these relationships...and use them to promote collegial learning?

Process and challenges

Building a professional culture that values learning will not happen overnight or by decree, especially in settings with low morale or high stress. Creating a collaborative and learning-focused working culture may need to start with basic team building that includes: meeting needs for physical safety and order, establishing positive relationships among professional staff, and developing pride in what the school and district stands for. While building community, the work must be connected to the learning agenda for students, professionals, and the system as a whole. Otherwise, while helping people feel good about each other or their working situation, community building may contribute little to improvement of learning.

Challenges to building professional community

Resistance among professional staff to community-building efforts is likely to be strong in some settings. For example, prevailing norms may perpetuate teachers working in isolation from one another. The working environment may be fraught with stress, low morale, high staff turnover, or resistance to change. Internal power struggles may challenge efforts to build community, as can specialization of staff and inflexible procedures. A general lack of understanding or experience with the benefits of "learning community" may also cause resistance.

Ultimately, when these challenges are overcome, the benefits of a positive working community can sustain its growth. Strong, learning-focused communities offer professional support, a setting for managing conflicts, renewed commitment, and help with problems of practice.

Relationship building as the basis for a professional community

To face and overcome challenges, leaders depend on relationships. When created in a viable professional community, strong relationships can enable the hard work of professional improvement, as in this case of an assistant superintendent in an urban district:

> In order for the assistant superintendent to be able to tell principals the "hard stuff," and for the principals to hear it, she believes it is important to have developed a relationship with them. Through a series of interactions, the assistant superintendent communicates respect, caring, willingness to listen, and the message that "it's all about the work," which permits her to push individuals to higher levels of performance. Over several visits to a particular school, and after hearing the principal mislabel the components of balanced literacy (e.g., calling round-robin reading a guided reading lesson), the assistant superintendent decided it was time to push. She knew the principal wanted to please her and was working hard, so the assistant superintendent was able to combine critique with positive support. Over coffee one day, she said to the principal, "You're fooling yourself; you don't understand this stuff. Let's solve this together because we're not doing our jobs and the kids are being cheated." The principal was devastated, but she took the role of learner and was able to change her leadership practice.

The assistant superintendent's relationship with this principal is part of a larger professional culture in which the district's school leaders feel listened to and respected, as well as constantly challenged to improve learning opportunities for young people.

Key Idea:

A strong, learning-focused community offers professional support, renewed commitment, a setting for managing conflicts, and help with problems of practice.

3

Engaging External Environments that Matter for Learning:

Leaders build relationships with, and secure resources from, groups outside the school or district that can foster students' and teachers' learning.

Administrators in Mr. G.'s school and district share the view that Mr. G. and many of his colleagues hold—they believe that Hector's learning is limited by his family and community circumstances. Though they would like to help him, few have sought to understand this community or work with it. The administrators focus more on responding to state and federal policies and have not yet connected those policies with Hector's learning in ways that could improve it.

In contrast, leading for learning means interacting with the local community and more extended environments in ways that define and create opportunities for learning improvement.[12] Effective leaders seek to understand and use three kinds of environments in developing strategies for improving teaching and learning:

1. Family and community environments include parents, advocacy groups, human service agencies, municipal bodies, the media, corporate interests, and taxpayers.

2. Professional environments subsume the resources and constraints posed by unions, universities, professional networks and associations, and the local educator labor market.

3. Larger policy environments embody state reform policies, federal programs and policies, regulations and requirements.

Essential tasks for leaders

Engaging external environments that matter for learning means:

- Making efforts to understand community, professional, and policy environments, especially the elements that matter most for learning and teaching.
- Building relationships with individuals and groups to support specific aspects of the learning improvement agenda and also as a source of general good will.
- Anticipating resistances and devising ways to manage conflict.
- Garnering fiscal, intellectual, and human resources that support the learning agenda.

This work is simultaneously personal and political—personal, as leaders cultivate durable human connections with colleagues, community members, and others; and political, as leaders mobilize allies and create coalitions of diverse interests, often in the face of significant conflict.

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Key Idea:

Leading for learning means interacting with the local community and more extended environments in ways that define and create opportunities for learning improvement.

Engaging external environments looks like this —

IN SCHOOLS.

School leaders may:

- Visit families and community groups to explain the instructional program and learning agenda.
- Establish educational opportunities for community members that complement learning opportunities for school staff.
- Draw in potential critics by involving them in the school improvement process.
- Develop allies in the central office and proactively seek support for student and professional learning goals.
- Form partnerships with neighborhood groups focused on improving learning, particularly those groups with traditionally limited voice.

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL.

District administrators and staff may be in a position to:

- Educate school board members in building an improvement agenda and engage them as part of a district learning community.
- Promote the student and professional learning agenda with the media and influential community groups.
- Join forces with community-based leaders who care about the quality of learning and teaching.
- Develop allies at the state level and use these contacts to increase flexibility and instructional resources.
- Strategically use external requirements and resources to advance a local learning agenda.
- Form partnerships with civic or professional bodies that focus on learning improvement.

Reflective Questions:

① What groups outside your school or district are concerned about education, and in what ways? What can they offer?

② How (and how much) are you and other leaders interacting with outside groups? What other groups could you involve?

③ How do you work with the cultural and racial dynamics of the community you are serving?

Process and challenges

Building positive relationships with external groups and responding effectively to outside pressures and conditions means developing an understanding of the surrounding cultural and political environments. Doing so took this form in a small urban elementary school serving a linguistically diverse population:

> Over three years, two principals and a cadre of teacher leaders worked intensively to develop support for "critical conversation" about their teaching and the role that race, class, and language background play in it. This activity paralleled aggressive outreach to families in the community through home visits, educational activities for parents, and other means. Building consensus in the school came about through considerable struggle, as school staff confronted conflicts with each other and their preconceptions about the community they were serving. Initially, it was very difficult for participants to connect critical conversation with talk about their instructional practice. Ultimately, the staff worked together to understand what the children's origins in a disenfranchised, linguistically diverse community implied for their practice, while also engaging the community in school life.[13]

Reflective Questions:

④ How proactive are you, and other leaders, in your approach to outside groups?

⑤ Who outside the schools holds power and uses it to influence education? How can it be aligned with your district's or school's plans for improvement?

⑥ What outside groups might be willing to offer funds, expertise, moral support, etc., to further your school or district learning agenda?

Key Idea:

Leading for learning means searching for ways to make a learning agenda " good politics." A leader's best hope for overcoming resistance in the community, and for securing needed resources, is to proactively engage local groups.

Building relationships

Leaders need allies and some degree of mutual trust outside the organization as a base for moving forward on an aggressive improvement agenda. Through building external relationships, leaders develop political support for the learning agenda and manage conflicts surrounding it. They are likely to spend considerable time and energy forging these kinds of relationships through political coalitions and alliances with key constituents inside and outside the system. They may form partnerships with unions, community groups, local universities, and others to support facets of the learning improvement agenda, as in the following case:

> A new superintendent set out to build support for his troubled urban school district by assuming the role of "marketeer"—to convince the community that great things were happening in their public schools. Initially, he held community meetings to hear what the public perceived as good and what needed to be improved in the schools. Then, to appeal to the business community, he and his staff created a business plan focused on specific, achievable measures, which he talked through with anyone and everyone who would listen. He approached the media and was soon marketing the schools on television, radio, in newspapers, and in speeches. The free coverage continued, from news articles to billboards and daily faxes to local businesses. The superintendent noted, "I knew we were beginning to have the 'saturation' effect we wanted when taxi drivers, waitresses, parking attendants, and business executives began stopping me to say how excited they are about what our school system is doing for children." In due course, the public schools' nonprofit fundraising arm was able to generate large sums of money, volunteer help, and good will to support the public school—resources which had not been forthcoming prior to this superintendent's efforts.[14]

This apparent success in developing commitment to public education is notable since, too often, municipal politics, a hostile union, economic crises in the community, or organized opposition to reform overwhelm leaders' best efforts. Nonetheless, prospects for powerful, equitable learning greatly improve when public support for education is mobilized.

Anticipating and confronting resistances

Inevitably, some will resist leaders' attempts to move the school or district toward a new and demanding vision of learning and teaching. Parents may disagree with, or many not understand, the new vision; teacher unions may see the improvement strategies as a threat to the contract or their power base. Community members who believe the plans ignore their children's needs or undermine their interests and values will also resist. In some cases, it may be that political action against reform has little to do with education but much to do with broader power struggles in the community.

Leading for learning means searching for ways to make a learning agenda "good politics." Today's critics can become tomorrow's allies in furthering an improvement plan. School and district leaders' best hope for neutralizing resistance, or turning it into support, is to proactively engage relevant external groups.

Generating resources

Turning external environments into a resource for educational improvement is central to leading for learning. In the above case, the superintendent's community engagement built positive perceptions of the district and generated resources for its renewal. The range of such resources is extensive, even in communities that are considered impoverished.

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Fiscal and political resources are important to a learning agenda, but so are intellectual resources, including professional networks and community-based learning sites, and human resources such as volunteers and aides. Leading for learning entails finding and securing an array of external resources to advance the learning agenda.

4 Acting Strategically and Sharing Leadership:

Leaders mobilize activity along pathways leading to student, professional, and system learning. In the process, they distribute leadership across levels and among individuals operating from different vantage points.

In Mr. G.'s district, administrators manage district programs and functions without seeking relationships that link them and without an overall learning agenda to guide them. School administrators are largely consumed with daily demands and the crisis of the moment. Consequently, administrators at both levels have been unable to develop a strategy for creating a learning improvement plan. A contrasting approach is evident in this school:

> Aided by a small Comprehensive School Reform grant, the faculty and principal created a comprehensive plan that combined multiple interventions, each devised by a separate faculty task/study group. The groups took on different facets of a collective task—improving mathematics and literacy learning in the school. The first group came up with ways to reach out to the community. A second group reviewed the rigor and relevance of the curriculum and tried to correlate it to set of "best practices" derived from literature and exemplary teaching in the school. A third worked on homework issues and created a school-wide homework policy. A fourth considered how to maximize planning time for teachers, emphasizing collaborative work on curriculum and instructional issues and on classroom visitations. A fifth group looked more specifically at how the math and language arts curriculum could be better aligned with state and district standards. These activities were facilitated by both the principal and teacher leaders and used in the development of a strategic plan.

Essential tasks for leaders

Leading for learning strategically involves devising courses of action that use existing policies, support activities, management structures, and leadership resources to create improved learning opportunities for students, teachers, and the system.[15] As suggested by the example, leaders at both school and district levels are more likely to advance learning goals when they mobilize effort along multiple pathways that lead most directly to student, professional, or system learning. These could be called "pathways to learning."

Acting strategically and sharing leadership means:

- Identifying and creating pathways that have the greatest influence on the interactions of students, teachers, and content—at *this* time, in *this* setting.
- Mobilizing effort along more than one pathway, and linking those that reinforce each other in the classroom.
- Helping others assume and exercise leadership from different positions at both school and district levels.

Key Idea:

Leading for learning strategically means devising courses of action—along existing policy and practice pathways—to improve learning opportunities for students, teachers, and the system.

Leaders entering pathways from different vantage points add their perspective and expertise.

Acting strategically along pathways looks like this —

IN SCHOOLS.

Strategic, distributed action by school leaders may:

- Identify pathways that address aspects of students' and teachers' work that are demonstrably weak and ready for improvement.
- Locate and draw on staff expertise in developing school improvement initiatives.
- Create positions that share instructional leadership with the principal.
- Consider curriculum and instruction issues alongside workplace improvement.

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL.

District leaders might:

- Support the development of school-level leadership aimed at learning improvement.
- Evaluate district curriculum and assessment policies and their ability to promote student and teacher learning, and revise them to meet the improvement agenda.
- Set up policies and programs to address student learning needs related to the learning agenda.
- Use national and state teacher policy initiatives to build teacher leadership and local strategies for improving instruction.
- Develop policies, in collaboration with teacher leaders and unions, that provide teachers with time and resources to act on district and school improvement plans.

Reflective Questions:

① Where do you have greatest leverage in each of the most promising areas of improvement? Who else can exert leverage in these areas?

② Given current conditions and resources, which pathways in your school or district offer the best opportunities for influencing teaching and learning?

Process and challenges

Leading for learning involves finding or creating strategic opportunities along pathways to learning. Actions along these pathways are "strategic" to the extent that they address the learning focus and take advantage of events, relationships, conditions, and resources within a particular setting and time.

Figure 3 highlights a range of pathways to student, professional, or system learning, found in most schools and districts, that can be used to promote educational improvement. Some pathways aim at content and how it is assessed; others concentrate on students, teachers, or administrators. Still other pathways focus on conditions or structures affecting teachers' work lives.

Taking action along pathways to learning

How can leaders work along pathways to stimulate, guide, or support learning? After identifying a promising pathway to learning, leaders engage others in redesigning policy and practice. An instance of leaders' action along the assessment pathway—which extends from the choice and administration of testing programs in states or districts, to daily assessment activities in classrooms—illustrates the process of mobilizing effort along promising pathways. In the example below, leaders in an urban district saw an opportunity to encourage forms of assessment more closely linked to their goals for learning improvement.

> Seizing on an external mandate that encouraged the use of portfolios in assessing students' work, the district put together a year-long series of workshops that encouraged schools to create a portfolio of standard-bearing work for every child. Teacher leaders from each school were invited to these workshops and expected to become the in-school experts on the use of portfolios and

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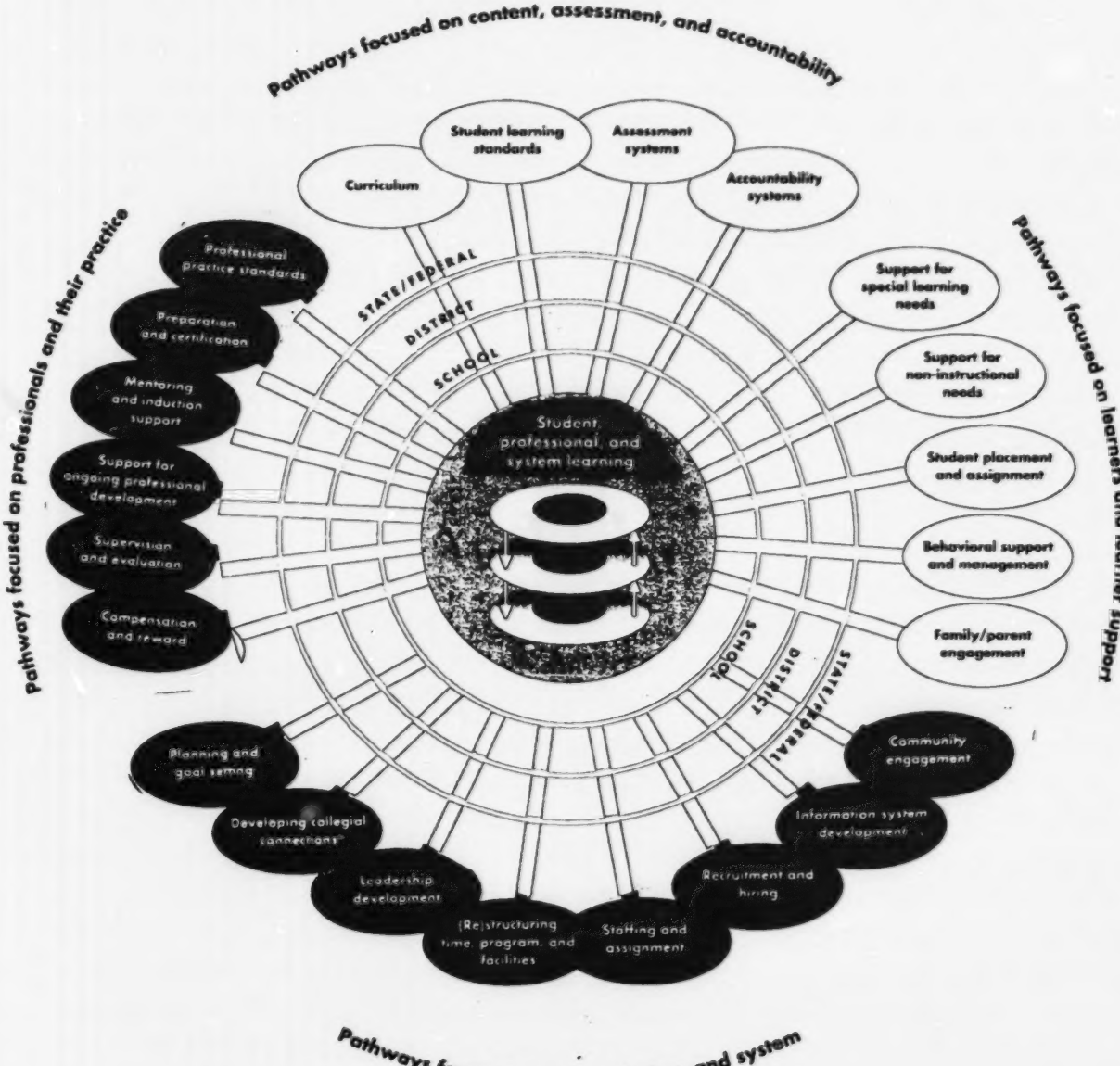
Figure 3: *A Range of Pathways*



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related assessment techniques, including the creation of explicit rubrics regarding standard-bearing work. These ideas were simultaneously introduced to principals and became a focus of school visits by district staff. Teachers had different responses to this innovation, some concluding that rubrics were a useful tool for assessment and instruction and tried to create them. Others felt that traditional grading was a sufficient representation of students' work quality, but by year's end, many teachers had altered their assessment practices.

In this case, leaders took advantage of external assessment pressures, engaged others in inquiry into assessment methods, and encouraged many teachers to reconsider their classroom assessment practices. They did so by combining activity along multiple pathways (assessment, professional development, accountability, and leadership development). District leaders involved teacher leaders who were in a better position to persuade their colleagues to think critically about useful and preferred forms of classroom-based assessment. The strategy they pursued combined district-wide assessment policies with classroom-level expertise. Through a combination of persuasion, modeling, strong-arming, resource allocation, and other inducements, these leaders moved the district toward a broader repertoire of student assessments and ways of using evidence to improve educational practice.

Reflective Questions:

③ How is leadership shared in your school or district, and how is it shared between district and school?

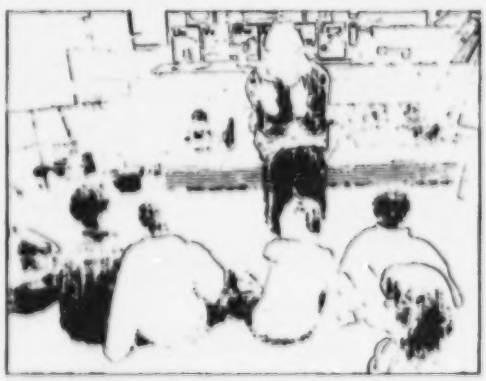
④ Who leads (or can be encouraged to lead), and how can their leadership be supported?

⑤ How can you and other leaders connect work along different pathways to reinforce your learning improvement agenda?

Distributing leadership

Different vantage points—defined by one's professional role and its related activities—are critical to strategic, distributed leadership action.[16] In the above example, three kinds of leaders (district administrators, principals, and teachers) contributed to the portfolio assessment initiative. They worked along several different pathways, each offering a different angle on assessment and, ultimately, on instructional practice.

The example merely hints at the complex work of leadership along and among pathways. The *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* offers more detailed pictures of how leaders in specific schools and districts have taken advantage of particular pathways to address their learning improvement agendas.



5

Creating Coherence:

Leaders bring student, professional, and system learning into relationship with one another and with learning goals.

Administrators in Mr. G.'s district and school have not looked closely at how teachers and students are making sense of their mathematics curriculum, assessments, improvement programs, and policies. Nor have they looked for ways to link one function to another (e.g., assessment of mathematics learning and professional development for math teachers). While they work hard at managing the schools, they have yet to imagine how their disparate efforts can relate to each other or help Mr. G. see new possibilities for his practice.

Critical to leading for learning is finding ways to develop a sense of clarity and coherent support for the improvement of instruction.[17] When leaders stimulate and guide activity along multiple pathways, two questions arise: How well are the activities linked to one another? How effectively do they connect student, professional, and system learning? The case below illustrates one answer to these questions:

A middle school uses bi-weekly, two-hour faculty study groups to examine samples of student work for evidence of learning progress and areas of need, and to identify future instructional steps to take with particular students or groups of students. In these sessions, staff are learning about high-quality student work as well as planning ways to make that happen in classrooms. Each study group posts a public record of their work, to which the principal provides feedback, questions, and affirmation. In addition, study groups report their progress and evidence of student learning improvement to the whole staff at staff meetings. Student achievement is steadily increasing.

Here, activity along multiple pathways focuses on all three learning agendas: student learning, by considering special learning needs and the quality of particular students' work; professional learning, by engaging faculty in study groups to learn about their students' learning, and by getting ideas for better teaching; and system learning, by generating data and insight into school performance, shared publicly with other staff and school leaders. The activities bring coherence to learning improvement by mutually reinforcing connections among the three learning agendas.

Essential tasks for leaders

Creating coherence means:

- Utilizing pathways that intentionally address student, professional, and system learning around a focused improvement agenda.
- Aligning activities with resources, with each other, and with compelling visions for the improvement of learning and teaching.
- Creating structures and incentives for learning around a common improvement agenda at all levels of the system.

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Key Idea:

Leading for learning involves developing clarity and coherence in the improvement agenda. Leaders connect activities along multiple pathways to one another and to student, professional, and system learning.

Creating coherence looks like this —

IN SCHOOLS.

School leaders may work to:

- Build professional development around data on student learning.
- Locate professional development in classrooms.
- Use inquiry into learning and teaching performance as a basis for ongoing school improvement planning.
- Ensure that goals for learning improvement are consistent with the values shared by the school community.
- Use teacher evaluation and school improvement planning as vehicles to focus on learning goals.

AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL.

District-level administrators and staff may strive to:

- Make expert staff available to schools to help with focused improvement efforts.
- Restructure the district professional development function to support curriculum and instructional improvement efforts.
- Develop data that provide information about student learning which can be used in professional development.
- Allocate resources consistently in support of student and professional learning goals.

Process and challenges

Coherence means more than aligning learning improvement activities. It also involves developing consensus for carrying out improvement activities; linking those activities to a compelling vision that emphasizes powerful, equitable student learning; and allocating resources to the activities.

Challenges to creating coherence

Because it involves such a broad span of activities and people, developing coherence can be difficult for leaders to achieve. School leaders may face challenges from staff who don't agree with the learning goals, for example. Some leaders may not be able to find ways to connect teacher support with curriculum demands, or they may discover that appropriate resources are hard to get. State assessments and accountability requirements may pose a challenge to coherence at both school and district levels.

The attempt to build coherence in large districts, especially those in urban settings, can be especially elusive. Many conditions—including staff turnover and the division of labor in a large bureaucracy—tend to diffuse the focus, disconnect one function from another, and make it more difficult to develop working relationships. Political conditions and other environmental constraints in big cities further complicate leaders' efforts to build cohesion

Reflective Questions:

① How is professional development linked to student learning in your school or district? How does inquiry into performance focus on what students and professionals are learning?

② What makes it hard to connect improvement activities, resources, and learning agendas? What barriers inhibit learning improvement?

③ How can you and others increase coherence?

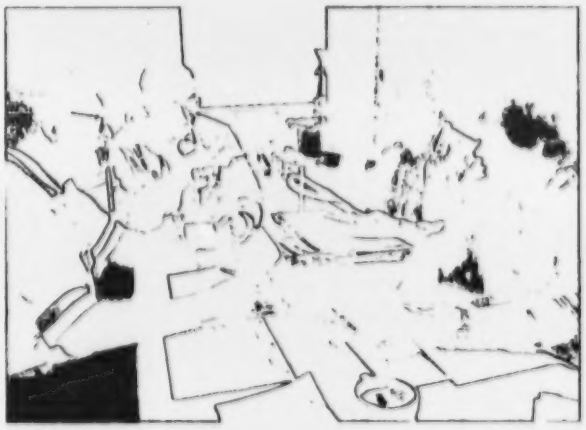
in the agenda for powerful and equitable student learning. But, promising evidence from a growing number of cases suggests that, even in the face of adverse circumstances, school systems can successfully enact coherent reform strategies. For example:

> One district, known initially in a large metropolitan region as a "dumping ground" for low-performing teachers, created a "teaching quality" improvement strategy that featured active recruitment, extensive mentoring, explicit teaching standards, and support for the ongoing work of the teaching corps, as well as opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles. Ultimately, these were linked to a new set of student learning standards. Patiently developed over a period of years, this strategy provided the foundation for a transformation in this district's performance and ultimately its image.[18]

Other districts that have reorganized themselves into coherent multilayered ("nested") learning communities to support students', teachers', and leaders' learning have modest to impressive student learning gains to show for their efforts.[19]

Mechanisms for building coherence

School and district leaders can seek to achieve coherence, initially, by focusing persistently and publicly on learning and, subsequently, in ways that link activities along and among pathways. In the process, leaders can link disparate activities to each other and a learning improvement agenda by creating teams and other mechanisms for encouraging dialogue, expectations, and support for collaborative work. Over time, the result can be a consistent set of activities and resources focused on the mission of improving teaching and learning.



Meeting Hector's Challenge

Meeting Hector's challenge is not an easy task. But equipped with a focused picture of the learning goal for a district or school and how to get there, leaders can make learning opportunities more powerful and equitable than they tend to be currently. To that end, the reflective tools and ideas offered here can help leaders design multiple, mutually reinforcing supports for learning throughout the system.

Images of Possibility

A growing number of schools that have many students who struggle with learning tasks now foster education that responds to the needs of learners who have not been well served.[20] For example, note what leaders are doing in the following school with a population similar to Hector's:

> The principal of an urban elementary school promotes discussion about teaching practice and equity by strategically drawing together efforts in curriculum, professional development, and hiring, with a focus on school structure, culture, and leadership development. In an effort to make teachers' practice more public and open to scrutiny, she strives to create a context where they can talk openly about their teaching and the challenges they face. In the process, the principal pushes them to consider their teaching in light of race, class, and language diversity. She has refocused staff meetings from discussing procedures and logistics, to discussing instructional practice. She has also created times for teachers to explore what research has found on effective teaching in high poverty, high diversity schools. Along with several teacher leaders, and in conjunction with district-level staff, the principal has focused the staff's attention on improving literacy teaching in primary grades. At the same time, she renegotiated the use of Eisenhower funds to support a year-long study group for upper elementary teachers on approaches to mathematics teaching that respond to state standards.[21]

This principal and others on her staff are bringing related activities together to influence students' educational experiences and outcomes. While building professional community, she is helping her staff engage with a diverse student population. Through her presence and prompting, she has established a focus on powerful and equitable student learning. To pursue this focus, she has acted strategically along several pathways, while supporting other leaders' efforts.

Efforts like this by school leaders sometimes happen in isolation, but they are more likely to take place in districts that proactively focus on the improvement of learning and teaching. The principal above works within this district-wide environment:

> The district's director of elementary education—herself an expert on early literacy—is deeply concerned about the pattern of low reading performance in six elementary schools, three of which (including the one described above) are on the state's list of schools required to receive extra assistance and to adopt a prescribed, structured approach to reading instruction. Seeing an

Key Idea:

Leaders with a clear picture of where they are going and the multiple routes to reach that destination are better able to make learning opportunities far more powerful and equitable than they tend to be now.

opportunity in a state grant program for early literacy improvement, she secures extra resources for the six schools, sets up a Literacy Resource Network to support them, and requires them to participate. Several are eager, while others reluctantly agree to try.

The Literacy Resource Network fits nicely with the district's advocacy for professional learning, its insistence on school accountability with support, its focus on the "literate child," and a related initiative promoting classroom-based assessment techniques. In collaboration with two other departments, and with the schools' principals, the director has formed a professional development strategy that combines school-based study groups and district-level workshops on new and powerful reading approaches modeled after Reading Recovery techniques. Drawing on her knowledge of the schools' staffs from periodic visits, the director taps several teachers with strong expertise in literacy teaching to lead the study groups. Two years after the inception of the Literacy Resource Network, four of the six schools see a rise in their reading scores.

These developments result from district-level activity along several pathways, a distributed pattern of leadership at both school and district levels, and engagement with external demands and resources. District-wide commitments, such as its literacy emphasis and insistence on school accountability with support, create the conditions for focused strategies and coherent support for teachers' work to emerge.

Getting There

Key Idea:

This framework of reflective tools can help leaders visualize powerful, equitable student learning and the professional and system learning necessary to get there. The tools can help clarify core values, promote professional community, and highlight the need for inquiry and evidence in the improvement process.

This framework of reflective tools and ideas points leaders toward promising possibilities and suggests routes and strategies for realizing them. But images of possibility are not all it will take to achieve the promise of education that continues to elude Hector and many American school children. Leaders often encounter formidable obstacles and must reach within themselves, while reaching out to professional and wider communities, to attain perspective and emotional strength to persist. The tools and ideas presented here have no magic to make the hard work disappear or right the wrongs that have deep historical and societal roots.

For the many districts and schools that have not yet developed the kinds of leadership illustrated here, the overall framework offers perspectives, tools, and tactics to move forward. It can help educators visualize ways to make student learning more powerful and equitable, and the professional and system learning that is necessary to get there. It clarifies the core values that bolster these efforts and emphasizes the need for professional communities that share those values. It prompts a hard and careful look at system conditions and external environments, and points to places where leaders might search for solutions appropriate to their local settings. Ultimately, however, it is the work of motivated leaders that will advance educational systems towards powerful and equitable education.

Acknowledgments and Endnotes

Acknowledgments

The ideas presented here represent the thinking of many people, too numerous to name (a more complete listing of the individuals who made significant contributions to the framework's development appear in the *Leading for Learning Sourcebook*). The other members of the Framework Development team, however, deserve special mention: Milbrey McLaughlin and Michael Milliken (Stanford University), Brynnen Ford and Anneke Markholt (University of Washington), and Amy Hightower (American Federation of Teachers). We also acknowledge the collaboration of Kim Jinnett, Edward Pauly, and their colleagues at Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, whose guidance and helpful, critical advice have been crucial to the success of this development process since its inception.

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1. Information on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) can be found at the Consortium's website—**www.ccsso.org/isllc.html**. National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do* (Alexandria, VA: NAESP, 2002) illustrates standards for leadership practice by professional associations.

2. Source: Adapted from case in Knapp, M. S., & Associates, *Teaching for Meaning in High-Poverty Classrooms* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995, pp. 5-6).

3. The notion of "powerful learning" is rooted in cognitive approaches to the study of teaching and learning. See, for example, the summaries of related work in Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.), *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School* (Washington DC: National Academy Press, 1999); and Brandt, R., *Powerful Learning* (Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision & Curriculum Development, 1998). Scholarship on equitable learning opportunities and results has a long history, most recently in writings on closing the achievement gap and on education that is culturally relevant to the lives of young people who have been historically underserved by schools. See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

4. Instruction as the interaction of learner, teacher, and content has appeared periodically in the literature on teaching, recently in Cohen, D. K., Raudenbush, S., & Ball, D. L., *Resources, Instruction, and Educational Research* (Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching & Policy/University of Washington, 2000).

5. Opportunities for professional learning arise in interactive contexts and are well described in literature over the past decade on teacher learning, professional development, and collegial community, summarized in *Leading for Learning Sourcebook*. Evidence connecting professional development with student learning is scarce, but some studies have established connections between the two, as in Cohen, D. K., & Hill, H. C., "Instructional Policy and Classroom Performance: The Mathematics Reform in California." *Teachers College Record*, 102 (2001), 9-26; and Carpenter, T. P., Fennema, E., Peterson, P. L., Chiang, C., & Loef, M., "Using Knowledge of Children's Mathematics Thinking In Classroom Teaching: An Experimental Study," *American Educational Research Journal*, 26 (1989), 499-531.

6. The concept of "system learning" is analogous to some discussions of "organizational learning". See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

7. The five areas of action are best understood as a set of assertions about the relationship between learning and leadership action, for which there is not yet a complete body of empirical evidence.

8. See recent research on district-level leadership in high-poverty districts—for example, Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., & Herlihy, C., *Foundations for Success: Case Studies of How Urban School Systems Improve Student Achievement* (Washington DC: Council of Great City Schools, 2002).

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9. Accounts of Community School District 2 in NYC and the San Diego City Schools offer the most fully documented cases of a leadership focus deriving from a theory of learning and teaching that is strongly championed by district leaders—see Elmore, R. F., & Burney, D., "Investing in Teacher Learning: Staff Development and Instructional Improvement," in L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999, pp. 263-291); Hightower, A. M., *San Diego's Big Boom: District Bureaucracy Meets Culture of Learning*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2001).

10. The role of values in leaders' work has been variously described, especially in work on the moral dimensions of leadership, the education of disenfranchised students, and education in communities of color. See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

11. See research on professional learning community—for example, McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E., *Professional Communities and the Work of High School Teaching* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

12. Accounts of external environments that impinge on learning, leadership, and improvement efforts are numerous. These dynamics come into sharp relief in scholarship on school and district reform in settings serving diverse, low-income communities—for example, work by Comer, Lomotey, Garcia, and others. See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

13. Source: Markholt, A. *Se Hace Camino al Andar: Development of Critical Capacity in an Urban Elementary School*, unpublished doctoral dissertation (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2002).

14. Source: Stanford, J., *Victory in Our Schools* (New York: Bantam Dell Publishing Group, 1998).

15. The notion advanced here of strategic action along multiple pathways has various roots, among them, work on systemic reform, comprehensive school reform, and instructional leadership. See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

16. The idea of distributed leadership advanced here is well captured in Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B., "Investigating School Leadership Practice: A Distributed Perspective," *Educational Researcher*, 30 (2001), 23-28; and Elmore, R. J., *Building a New Structure for School Leadership* (New York: The Albert Shanker Institute, 2000).

17. Coherence is a continuing theme in work on systems, leadership, and school programs—for example, in writing by Fuhrman, Fullan, and Newmann and colleagues. See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

18. Source: Snyder, J., "New Haven Unified School District: A Teaching Quality System for Excellence and Equity," in Hightower, A. M., Knapp, M. S., Marsh, J. A., McLaughlin, M. W. (Eds.), *School Districts and Instructional Renewal* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002, pp. 94-110).

19. Systematic evidence has begun to accumulate regarding the effects of coherent policy and leadership at district level on learning improvement, building on formulations such as Resnick, L., & Hall, M. (1998), "Learning Organizations for Sustainable Education Reform," *Daedalus*, 127 (1998), 1-13. See *Leading for Learning Sourcebook* at www.ctpweb.org.

20. The growing body of evidence documenting schools' success in closing the achievement gap is one indication that many schools can offer powerful, equitable learning to students who have generally been poorly served in schools—for example, Haycock, K., *Dispelling the Myth Revisited* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2001).

21. Source: Adapted from Markholt, 2002, op cit.

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